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AUTHOR Ediger, Marlow
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ABSTRACT

A major problem in the teaching of reading is to determine the scope or breadth of the curriculum--how broad to develop the objectives of instruction becomes paramount in curriculum development. Breadth of the curriculum may then be represented by points on a continuum with a wider scope on one end and narrowing down toward the other end. This paper considers both reading instruction representing a broader scope and reading instruction representing a narrower scope. The paper states that with a widened scope, the teacher can include instructional objectives pertaining to word recognition skills, such as: phonics; syllabication skills; structural analysis; context clues; and configuration clues. It explains that the comprehension component results in a broader scope in the reading curriculum and enhances thinking skills, such as cause and effect thinking; comparisons and contrasts among literary selections read; application of content read, as well as developing main ideas; inferential reading and problem solving; metacognition; understanding imagery in reading; reading for a sequence of ideas; developing interest and enthusiasm for reading across the curriculum; and reading for personal enrichment and growth. The paper states that there are also times when the scope of the reading curriculum will be narrowed, for example, when sustained silent reading (SSR) is in the offing whole language approaches are being used only, without word identification techniques being stressed; personalized reading is a little more structured than SSR, and emphasizes a whole language approach in teaching and learning. The paper also discusses reading across the curriculum for optimal achievement. (NKA)

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Reading, Scope, and the Curriculum.

by Marlow Ediger

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READING, SCOPE, AND THE CURRICULUM

A major problem in the teaching of reading is to determine scope or breadth of the curriculum. Thus, how broad to develop the objectives of instruction becomes paramount in curriculum development. Breadth of the curriculum or scope may then be represented by points on a continuum with a wider scope on one end and narrowing down toward the other end.

A More Inclusive Scope

Increased inclusion of knowledge, skills, and attitudes in lessons and units of study in reading represents a broader scope. With a widened scope, the reading teacher may plan to include objectives of instruction pertaining to the following word recognition skills, among others:

1. phonics whereby students develop skill in associating salient individual sounds (phonemes) with symbols (graphemes). Students then should be able to read many words due to the usefulness of phonics in unlocking many unknown words.

2. syllabication skills in which the learner is assisted to divide words into sound units. By identifying sound units or syllables, the student then may be able to synthesize and recognize what was unknown.

3. structural analysis which emphasizes dividing a word into meaningful parts such as prefixes and suffixes to ascertain the unknown word.

4. context clues whereby the student learns to supply a meaningful word in place of the unknown within the sentence being read. The

supplied word may not be the correct one, but may be checked further for accuracy with the use of phonics.

5. configuration clues in which the shape or form of the word may provide necessary clues to identify the unknown word in ongoing reading endeavors. Thus, some letters are taller than others and selected words are longer in length as compared to other words (Ediger and Rao, 2000, Chapter Six).

Emphasizing the above named word identification skills in reading instruction broadens the scope as compared to using a whole language approach in literary endeavors. A systematic approach in phonics instruction would have its very own scope (what should be taught) as well as its own sequence (when these learnings should be taught). But, the total reading program involves phonics plus additional objectives of instruction such as reading comprehension. Most reading teachers would tend to stress a phonics as needed approach in teaching students. An integrated procedure in teaching phonics is then being emphasized. Phonics is being stressed within the subject matter read, not as a separate area of the curriculum. Phonics skills should aid students to become independent readers. Self direction in reading is a must! Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are integrated into the language arts curriculum (Ediger, 1999, 41-45).

The comprehension component results in a broader scope in the reading curriculum with the following thinking skills:

1. cause and effect thinking within ongoing reading lessons and units of study.

2. comparisons and contrasts among literary selections read such as in different settings, plots, character traits, themes, and underlying messages.

3. application of content read, analysis of gleaned ideas, as well as developing main ideas and subordinate content in the reading of subject matter.

4. inferential reading and problem solving as major objectives of reading instruction

5. literal acquisition of content in that subject matter read provides building blocks for more complex levels of thought.

6. metacognition in that the student thinks about thinking. Thus, the student rehearses what has been learned through reading and also realizes what is left to learn.

7. understanding imagery in reading (including metaphors and similes), alliteration, and onomatopoeia.

8. reading for a sequence of ideas so that appropriate order of subject matter is in evidence.

9. developing interest, zest, and enthusiasm for reading across the curriculum.

10. doing reading for personal enrichment and growth (Ediger, 1999, 64-70).

Narrowing the Scope of the Reading Curriculum

There are times when the scope of the reading curriculum will be narrowed. When sustained silent reading (SSR) is in the offing, whole

language approaches are being used only, without word identification techniques being stressed. Each person in the school setting, then, chooses a book or selection to read within a specific time during the school day for approximately 15 minutes. Students here have ample opportunities to see other children as well as adults read. This may serve as a model for the learner in wanting to do more reading.

Personalized reading is a little more structured than SSR, and also emphasizes a whole language approach in teaching and learning. With personalized reading, the student engages in seeking, self selection, and pacing. Thus, the student selects which library book to read from among alternatives. The selection is generally made based on interest factors as well as the chosen book being on the understanding level of the reader. No time is spent on word recognition techniques to be developed within learners unless a very short period of it is spent during conference time with the reading teacher, after the student has completed reading the library book. During conference time, the teacher may check compression skills of students in reading. He/she may notice problems of students in reading, not only in comprehension, but also in identifying words when he/she reads aloud a chosen selection from the book completed in reading. However, the time given to word recognition skills study is indeed minimal (Ediger, 1997, Chapter Five).

Personalized reading stresses student

1. ownership of the reading curriculum whereby he/she makes sequential selections of library books to read.

2. ordering of reading selections in that sequence resides within the

learner, not the teacher nor the library books chosen for reading.

3. determination of scope whereby the total number of library books read is decided upon by the student.

4. conference agendas with teacher assistance, informal as they may be, can be arranged cooperatively in terms of acceptable scope (See Ediger, 1978, 39).

5. rate of speed in reading is based on the learner's talents and abilities.

Reading Across the Academic Curriculum

The greatest breadth of scope in the reading curriculum would tend to occur when there truly is a district centered emphasis upon students doing well in reading in all academic disciplines. Each teacher of elementary or secondary academic areas would take on the task of being a professional reading teacher. Much inservice education will have occurred in assisting teachers to be knowledgeable and skillful in the art of reading instruction within the academic discipline being taught. The secondary teacher of the social sciences, the different branches of science, language and literature, or diverse areas of mathematics, among other academic disciplines, needs to be a reading instructor along with being highly knowledgeable and skillful pertaining to the academic discipline taught. What might a teacher, specializing in a specific academic discipline, for example, then do to encourage more optimal achievement from reading subject matter in that content area?

1. introduce the new words to be encountered by the student in the next assignment by printing these on the chalkboard clearly for all to see.

2. discuss the meaning(s) of each word as it will be used contextually in the next reading assignment. Use each new word in a meaningful sentence. Inductive/deductive methods may be used here.

3. build background information within students by using the new words together with related audiovisual aids so that the learner will better understand the ensuing subject matter to be read. The background information together with the new subject matter to be read should provide for quality sequence in learning. Good sequence is necessary in order that each student learns as much as possible.

4. there should be one or more feasible purposes for students to gather information for, while reading. The purposes are questions which the learner/teacher would like to have answered as a result of the former reading the new assignment. The teacher needs to be certain that students individually are paying careful attention to what is being introduced and discussed in the above named learning activities. Careful monitoring of student progress is needed in all teaching/learning opportunities. The reading may be done as homework experiences, during study hall time, or partly during class, although the time is usually short in duration here unless a block of time during class sessions is used.

5. adequate time needs to be given to discuss what students have read from the new lesson. Positive discussions need to be conducted so that quality self concepts may be in the offing. Projects might also be developed individually or collaboratively by students to reveal what has been achieved through reading with the use of multiple intelligences (see Gardner, 1993). Discussions and project methods of learning should

include the following;

a) time for deliberation and thought of ideas presented.

b) affective learnings, as objectives to be achieved,whereby student selection, decision making, and choice are involved in choosing reading materials as well as evaluation techniques.

c) attention given to rational balance among knowledge, skills, and attitudinal objectives in the reading curriculum.

d) challenging and yet achievable objectives being stressed in ongoing learning activities.

e) student meaning and understanding of subject matter read being thoroughly in evidence.

f) time on task being emphasized in the reading curriculum. Hands on learning also is in the offing to provide for individual differences among learners.

g) helping learners to become intrinsically motivated in reading activities (See Tiedt, 1983, Chapter Eight).

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